

S. H. 1.

To the Kings most Excellent Majesty.

Dread Sovereign,

HAVING seen a Proclamation wherein your Majesty complains of the Injuries you receive in your Customs, I could not withhold, but, as in duty bound, humbly present you with a few of those malignant roots from whence they spring, whereby Navigation and Trade are also much decayed, their interest being much concerned in the well management of your Customs: for those wholesome Laws provided for the increase of Navigation, and advance of Trade, are intrusted in the same hands your Customs are; so that he that shall be Ignorant, negligent, or corrupt in the one, cannot be understanding, faithful, and diligent in the other: Therefore it being of so great concernment not only to your Majesties Receipt, but to the publique good, I humbly crave your Consideration in the premises following, wherein it will appear that the most readiest ways that can be invented for the ruine of your Customs is now practised.

First, All Officers are left at liberty, without Bonds, Security, or Oath, given for the faithful Discharge of that Trust imposed on them, which doth greatly encourage them to act their will and pleasures towards your Revenues ruine, for their own benefit.

Secondly, As it this were not sufficient to lead them to betray that Trust imposed on them, they are inforced by meer necessity to fraudulent practices, their Galleries being reduced so low, they cannot live upon it; so that it is become a Proverb between the Merchant and Officer, *Live, and let live*: Which is, the Merchant and Officer to share your Majesties Revenue, so far as they make it not publique to every eye.

Thirdly, To inforce them to make the quicker and greater spoil of your Majesties Receipt, their Places are made so uncertain in the enjoyment of them, that let them be never so able and faithful, a slenderous Accusation, laid by such as are either great, or in favor, out of them without audience, which inforces them to provide for the future, and, as the Proverb is, *To make Hay while the Sun shines*.

Fourthly, The number of supernumerary Officers being great, and necessitated, will be supplied by your Revenues ruine, which makes the spoil the greater.

Fifthly, Their bestowing Places by favor, without regard had to the persons, parts, and abilities fitting the place or no; by their carelessness herein great prejudice to your Receipt doth ensue: For by the ignorance of one Officer there may be as much loss, as by the knavery of another; your Customs varying as the quality of Goods doth, and one commodity having various denominations, the one sort shall pay three or four times the duty of the other, and through the ignorance of an Officer, the best shall pass under the worst denomination.

Sixthly, The cutting Masters of Ships off in their Portage draweth an inconveniency upon your Tidesman: for formerly, upon the allowance all Masters had for Portage, the Tidesman, who hath the whole charge of your Receipt aboard, and cannot stir without prejudice to it, could aboard have commanded things necessary and convenient, as his Diet, or the like; but now is inforced to comply with the Master, to do him some favor for what he receives.

The onely Persons that are by these practices discouraged, and necessitated, are those in whom the sole Trust of the Income of your Revenue lieth; who are the two main props and pillars that keep up your Revenue, if faithful; if corrupt, lets it fall to the ground; which persons are onely two, your Land-Waiter, and Tidesman: For from the first Entrance of any Ship or Vessel into any Port, until delivered, your whole Revenue, night and day, lieth under the Tidesmans charge; and what he doth faithfully preserve and keep, is to be delivered by your Land-Waiter, according to the true quantity and quality for which the Custom is paid: If the Coast, which is most shamefully sleighted, were secured to convey your Receipt into the Ports, and your Tidesman and Land-Waiter but faithful and diligent, your Customs would have a vast improvement: but if necessity and opportunity will make a Thief, it is impossible your Officers can be honest, by what they are now, through discouragement and necessity, put upon.

NOW that your Majesty may have able, faithful, diligent Officers, which are the support of your Revenue; and that they may be so preserved and kept, these following Proposals I tender.

Let a Pardon first be past for all Offences hitherto committed; and the reason is, I believe very few Officers, either in *London*, or the Out-Ports, but have, as I may say, sold themselves to the Merchants: And if any Action hitherto they have done, the knowledge whereof will make them incapable of their employment, without a Pardon they must be slaves for the future, not daring to be any other, for fear their former frauds and bribes be discovered; therefore first set them free, and I doubt not but these following preserves them honest.

First, Let no Officer be employed in the Customs, but what are bound in good Sums, with good Sureties, for the faithful Discharge of their Duty; and he that shall betray the trust on him imposed, to the prejudice of your Majesties Receipt, to forfeit his Bond, and lose his Place, never to be employed more; for the taking them in again, after once convicted, doth but imbolden others to commit the like crimes.

Secondly, Let your Officers be allowed a sufficient Gallery, if it be something extraordinary, more than a competency, your Majesty cannot better improve what you give, except the Merchant were so honest he would freely pay his Customs: But otherwise, if that it be advanced by your Officers faithfulness and care, or spoiled by his negligence and corruption; to encourage them to the one, and prevent them in the other, is to allow them a sufficient Gallery.

Thirdly, Let them have an assurance of the certain continuance of their Places, so long as faithful; for the parting with understanding men, and taking in the ignorant, doth but strengthen your Adversaries, and weaken your Receipt: for none knows how better to deceive your Majesty, and help the Merchant, than those that have served you.

Fourthly, Let the number of Officers be lessened, who being necessitated, and not able to live, must make the greater spoil: therefore let them be reduced to as many as are needful; and the extraordinary charge your Majesty is put to with supernumeraries will very much supply the extraordinary charge of those Officers necessary.

Fifthly, That your Majesty may for the future have able Officers, let none be taken into your Customs (I mean, below-stairs) above a Tidesman; and in case a Surveyors place be made voyd by death, or otherwise, let the eldest Land-Waiter enjoy it; if a Land-Waiters place, the eldest Tidesman: this future hopes of bettering their condition will be a strong tie to keep them faithful; besides, by this means your Officers will be fitted with parts and abilities, not onely for the place they enjoy, but also to judge and instruct those beneath them; and it will the more deter them beneath from fraudulent practices, having them above them that have past through their places, and understand their ways and opportunities.

Sixthly, Let Masters of Ships have their former allowance for Portage, and the Mariners something, as your Majesty shall think fit, according to the proportion of the Receipt of their Cargo; then shall your Tidesman have no engagement lie upon him for those things necessary he receives, and the rugged Sailer will be more respectful, and timorous in acting for the Merchant to your prejudice, for fear of losing what is his own.

These things considered; First, A competent Livelihood; Secondly, An assurance of the certain continuance thereof; Thirdly, The future hopes of a better condition will undoubtedly make that man faithful, that hath either any spark of honesty, or common reason in him: But if there should be any so foolish, as not to value these, which I think there is none but will; yet the forfeiture of his Bond, and the certain loss of his employment for ever, will undoubtedly deter him from the breach of that Trust imposed on him.

Let but these Remedies be forthwith applied, and you will finde in this Vintage what a vast improvement of your Customs will be made hereby, and what a vast spoil hath been made in your Revenue; to make which appear, this I propound, That there are many Ships gone for *Bordeaux*, and other places, for Wines this year, which came laden home the last year; at their return let a strict care be taken at the delivery of them, and by comparing last years Entries with this, it will be found, how shamefully short they made out their Tunnage, besides the great quantities of Wine entered for Vinegar; Vinegar paying but 5. s. per Tun, and Wine 6. l. per Tun: To make this appear, if your Majesty think fit, I shall use my weak endeavors, and give satisfaction herein: If then it shall appear, that a vast loss hath been in Goods of such bulk and danger in removing, what must there be in fine Goods, and others, that are to be conveyed away with more ease and safety.

I know not whether I am the first in this Work, or no, but I judge I may, the number being so few that understand it; and of those that do, few but are benefited by the spoil of it, besides the discouragements they shall meet with that undertake it, their adversaries being so many and great; so that, if not supported by your Grace, it will soon be smothered, and the Author, or any other, for the future discouraged. There are several other things practised, which are very destructive to your Receipt, which at present, for fear I should be too prolix, I omit. Therefore I shall add no further at present: But if these few lines, clad in a Russet stile, may finde acceptance with your Majesty, he shall further enlarge himself, that is

Your Majesties most humble, faithful, and obedient Servant,

RICHARD BOWER.